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The Patriot Game

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*Come all ye young rebels
And list while I sing.
For the love of one's country
Is a terrible thing. . .*

—Traditional

THE CHARGE WAS GUNRUNNING to Northern Ireland. The cast of characters might have come straight out of a John Ford movie. And the plot gimmick would have made the old director proud: The five Irish-born defendants could not be guilty of crimes against the United States government, they claimed in federal court in Brooklyn, because for 25 years the silent partner in their gunrunning operations had been the government—specifically the Central Intelligence Agency.

The prosecutor called the defendants terrorists "committed to the unification of Northern and southern Ireland through acts of violence." The five men, all supporters of the outlawed Irish Republican Army, said they were not terrorists but patriots—Irish patriots, and patriotic Americans as well. They had served this nation in World War II, Korea, Vietnam. But they would never turn their backs on the land of their birth. As one of their lawyers told the jury when the trial got under way, last September, "my client feels somewhat insulted" that the indictment covered only the last six months of his gunrunning activities. "Because, as the government well knows, [he] has aided, and abetted, and supplied arms to the rebels in Northern Ireland for a quarter of a century."

*This Ireland of mine has
For long been half free.
Six counties lie under
John Bull's tyranny. . .*

THE PATRIOT GAME IN Ireland has gone on over 800 years. The modern phase of the game can be dated from the 1916 Easter Rising, at the Dublin Post Office, which led to Great Britain's partitioning of Ireland into the



The Players: From left, defendants Gormley, Mullin, Flannery, Falvey, and Harrison.

6 counties of Ulster, or Northern Ireland, and the 26-county, so-called Irish Free State. This produced a disastrous civil war, with continuing executions, jailings, torture, and betrayals; a range of political and economic repression; continuing die-hard resistance by the I.R.A.; and, ultimately, the present agony in Northern Ireland. The enduring British presence among them con-

fers on the Irish a dark sense of being the longest-occupied nation on earth, and Gaelic political positions long ago hardened into petrified wood. Thoughtful people on both sides, North and South, Protestant and Catholic, may acknowledge that were the British to go home tomorrow the suffering and bloodshed almost certainly would escalate. But I.R.A. members always have disagreed